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## Life beyond the Grave: Christian Interfaith Perspectives

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ethos, teachings, and practices that have prevailed among Church members and leaders over time and invite readers to assess their own understanding of the topic.

Part 2 contains four essays that focus on the Church's theology and its interaction with culture, geography, and the environment. In this section, Matthew C. Godfrey explores the Church's concept of Zion and how its placement and establishment have impacted the environment. Brett D. Dowdle reviews the social, cultural, and environmental challenges faced both by early missionaries to Britain and by British converts in Nauvoo. Richard Francaviglia next offers a fascinating discussion of what maps produced by early Church members reveal about Church environmental history and perceptions. Betsy Gaines Quammen concludes part 2 with an exploration of the historical, theological, cultural, economic, and environmental issues surrounding the establishment of Zion National Park.

Part 3 is a delightful anthology of articles covering a broad range of Church environmental history and issues. Jeff Nichols discusses the environmental and theological history of the livestock industry in Utah. Brian Frehner reviews the environmental history of irrigation in Utah and the challenges that controlling water created for the early Saints. Brian Q. Cannon follows with insights into the reasoning behind and environmental issues created by the Church's early efforts to establish new agricultural settlements throughout the Intermountain West and how those efforts fostered federal land use regulation. Nathan N. Waite next provides an overview of the historical theology and culture of gardening among Church members and the environmental issues that have contributed

to it. Rebecca K. Andersen concludes part 3 with a serious look at the environmental impact of aggregate mining in Utah and its interaction with the Church and its historical sites.

The volume concludes with two essays. The first is an epilogue by another pioneer in the discipline, George B. Handley, that provides a summary of what he has observed over the years regarding the Church's, and Church members', stances on, attitudes about, and actions toward caring for Creation. His essay gives hope for a future of responsible environmental stewardship. The closing essay by Elder Marcus B. Nash poignantly illustrates that hope and direction as he invites members of the Church to be environmentally careful and wise as we use and live on this earth God created for us.

—Terry Ball

*Life beyond the Grave: Christian Interfaith Perspectives*, edited by Alonzo L. Gaskill and Robert L. Millet (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2019)

As suggested in the title, *Life beyond the Grave* is a compilation of perspectives about the afterlife from a range of Christian denominations. The book's contents were taken from a 2016 academic conference hosted at Brigham Young University. Titled "Beyond the Grave: Christian Interfaith Perspectives," the ecumenical conference was designed to build understanding among Christian groups. Editor Robert L. Millet noted on the conference, "There has been no effort whatsoever to ignore theological differences between the various traditions, nor was it ever expected that a presenter compromise in the slightest what he or she holds to be true. . . . We

came together to listen, to learn, to ask questions and inquire, in short, to better understand one another" (viii).

*Life beyond the Grave* reports on the presentations of ten scholars, each from a specific faith, including those who are Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Anglican, Methodist, Calvinist, Latter-day Saint, Jehovah's Witness, Seventh-day Adventist, and Episcopalian. Some presentations are general introductions to a faith's basic beliefs: for example, in "Heaven Opened in the Soul: The Religious Imagination of Methodists," David McAllister-Wilson explains the Methodist open-ended or "ad hoc" belief of the afterlife. "Methodists seem to believe in the afterlife in the way we believe there will be life found elsewhere in the universe some day and a cure for cancer will be found: we expect so; we hope so. And our hopes are loosely derived from our belief in a wondrous creation and a loving God" (54).

Other pieces narrate theories or specific concepts regarding afterlife. Metropolitan Nikitas, for example, in "Changed by Grace: Some Introductory Thoughts on the Eastern Orthodox Understanding of Death and the Afterlife," looks at some Eastern Orthodox traditions regarding burial of the dead: "The body is not to be cremated or given to science for research. These actions are understood by many to be a type of irreverence shown for God's creation. . . . In fact, in traditional Orthodox lands there is no embalming, so the

body may return to the earth as soon as possible" (22).

Two of the ten chapters present Latter-day Saint perspectives: Brent L. Top's "The Near-Death Experience: Why Latter-day Saints Are So Interested" compares recorded near-death experiences of Latter-day Saints with the Church's doctrine, explaining that "core elements [of near-death experiences] feel familiar to most Latter-day Saints because of unique teachings regarding the immortal human soul, the nature and capacities of the spirit body, and the purposes and conditions of the postearth spirit realm" (96).

In "Christ's Descent into Hell: A Latter-day Saint Perspective," Robert L. Millet addresses the enduring Christian "soteriological problem of evil" (113) with an explanation of the Latter-day Saint doctrine of the redemption for the dead; he extensively quotes Joseph Smith and the teachings of the Restoration, concluding that "Latter-day Saints' hope in Christ is in the infinite capacity of an infinite Being to save men and women from ignorance as well as from sin and death. . . . His influence and redemptive mercies span the veil of death" (131–32).

*Life beyond the Grave* will appeal to readers interested in comparative religion, eschatology, and cultural awareness.

—Alec Joseph Harding